

BALTHASAR KREISCHER PAPERS

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

Arranged and Described by

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PROVENANCE:

The collection, given to the Staten Island Institute by Louise Kreisler in 1948-1949, contains both business and family papers from three generations of New York City and Staten Island Kreislers, as well as genealogical materials extending back to the Crusades, and correspondence with the European branch of the family after WWII. Museum and historical society archives often receive gifts of this nature, in which materials selected for preservation by family members for business and sentimental reasons are further culled by the donor prior to deposit with the institution. In these collections, record groups are rarely complete or in original order.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

BALTHASAR KREISLER (1813-1886): born in Hornbach, Bavaria, and received diversified training in the building field and related trades of brick making, stone cutting, and architecture. In 1836 he emigrated to New York City with plans to help rebuild after the devastating fire of 1835. In 1845 he and partner Charles Mumpeton established a firebrick business in Manhattan, using New Jersey clay. However, the clay beds extended to Staten Island, and in 1853 Balthasar began to explore and purchase land on Staten Island. In 1855, his first Staten Island factory was built. Balthasar retired in 1878, but his active participation in town affairs is attested to by his founding of St. Peterskirche in 1883. He continued to live in his mansion overlooking the factory until his death in 1886.

The papers of Balthasar Kreisler were divided into two series: box 1, folders .1-.14, contain papers produced in his lifetime, arranged alphabetically by type of record, ie: Articles of Agreement, Deeds, Will. Folders .15-.33 relate to the settling of his estate, administered by his son George F., and his in-law and associate William Steinway. The subseries of "Bills Paid" monthly from 1886-1888 includes folders .26-.44.

BALTHASAR KREISLER & SONS: (abbreviated B.K. & Sons in finding aid) The Kreisler firebrick manufacturing interests underwent several name changes reflecting changes in partnership. From 1870, with the addition of Geo. F. Kreisler as his father's partner, until the retirement of George in 1899, this name was in use. Box 2, folders .1-.3, contain background information on the firm, including a chronology prepared by Louise Kreisler, and a diagram of the town of Kreisleville. Folders .4-.38 contain business papers and records arranged alphabetically by record type and chronologically within the groupings, ie: Annual Statements, Contracts, Correspondence...and include materials from 1867-1898. Folders .39-.40 pertain to the Kreisler Brick Manufacturing Co., the name under which the factory was known after the Androvetta family bought out the Kreisler interest.

CRARY CLAY HEATER CO., N.Y. ANDERSON PRESSED BRICK CO., STATEN ISLAND KAOLIN CO.: The Kreislers enjoyed a considerable reputation for innovation in their field. Not only did they themselves patent various improvements, they also invested in and helped to establish related businesses. The records of the Crary Clay Heater Co., 1887-1880, box 3, folders .1-.31, are arranged to reveal the involvement of Geo. F. Kreisler and B.K. & Sons as investors. Folders .1-.4 contain the Incorporation papers, the remaining folders are alphabetically arranged by record type, ie: Annual Report, Financial Statement, Letters...including a lengthy subseries of patents issued and re-issued, and ending with Patterns and Stock Certificates.

Records of the N.Y. ANDERSON PRESSED BRICK CO. (1887-1893): box 3, folders .32-45, although less complete than the Crary records, follow the same system of arrangement. Of greatest interest are the 18 page 1887 "Prospectus" in folder .32, which contains a description of "The State of the Art" of brickmaking, and the series of patent assignments.

STATEN ISLAND KAOLIN CO.: The only record of the Staten Island Kaolin Co. (1876) is the Articles of Agreement, folder .46, included in this subgroup as a clay corporation in which the Kreisachers had an interest. The extent of their involvement is not immediately apparent. The co-partners named are Ostrander, Campbell, Heitman & Ellis. Ellis was an in-law and business associate of the Kreisachers.

GEORGE F. KREISCHER: oldest son of Balthasar, was born in 1846, and after education in New York and Germany, joined his father's firm in 1870. He, his wife Clara (Hoff), and children Louise and John resided in Manhattan. However, George became head of the firm at his father's retirement, and also managed many of his father's other financial and business affairs. Although George's son John was briefly involved in the brickworks, he pursued a career in law, so the firm passed from Kreisacher to Androvette proprietorship when George retired in 1899. He died in 1910.

The George F. Kreisacher Papers occupy two cubic feet. Box 4 contains Patents held by George, folders .1-.5; and Stock Certificates and other documents reflecting his investments in Gas Lighting and in Steam Powered Transportation on Staten Island and across the country. Of particular interest is the subseries folders .27-.35, related the Staten Island Rapid Transit Railway Co., of which GFK was a founding investor, a large shareholder, and eventually an officer.

Box 5 contains personal papers relating to GFK and Clara (Hoff) his wife, folders .1-.7; papers relating to his business affairs other than B.K. & Sons, folders .8-.24; his memberships in various social and fraternal organizations, folders .25-.29; military papers, folder .30; and his will, folder .33. the business papers include his personal account books and a subseries of bills of sale in which fractional interest in various boats & barges is conveyed. These may prove to have been used for shipping raw materials and finished products for B.K. & Sons. However, as the title is assigned to George, the papers have been placed in his personal files.

JOHN B. KREISCHER: second child of George F. Kreisacher and Clara (Hoff), John was born in New York City in 1875. He received an ME degree from Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey in 1896. After graduating with honor from New York Law School in 1903, he established offices in Manhattan. John married Gertrude Chase Gilpin in 1924, and they died without issue, she in 1944 and he in 1947. His papers, mostly memorabilia, lent themselves to a simple chronological arrangement in box 6, which traces his career from Stevens Institute of Technology through law school, bar exam and licensing, and leases on office space. Following his will, folder .23, is a small subseries of ephemerae relating to social and personal life, chronologically arranged in folders. 24-.29.

LOUISE KREISCHER: daughter of Geo. F. Kreisacher and Clara (Hoff), Louise was born and raised in New York City. After private tutoring at the elementary level, she studied at the Mrs. Sylvanus Reed, Peebles' and Thompson's Schools in New York City. She did not marry. In 1946, she published a philosophical/religious book entitled The Stars Tell The Story Too. During the 1940s, she also

became involved in compiling information about the Kreisler family, corresponded with European cousins, and eventually deposited family and business papers with the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences and with the New York Historical Society. She died in 1949.

It has therefore seemed appropriate to house the family histories and correspondence relating to her gifts to SIIAS and N-YHS with her personal papers in box 7. These include her scrapbook of travel souvenirs and family keepsakes, folder .1, and her book and publisher's promotional literature in folders .3, .4. The subseries of Family Correspondence in folders .6-9 contains drafts of her letters as well as replies from her cousins in Europe on the subject of family history. This is followed by a subseries of her correspondence with the repositories to which she donated family materials, folders .11-14. Kreisler family history and genealogy from various sources follow in folders .15-23. Finally, as fragments of family material for which there was no more appropriate location, folder .26 contains a letter from her uncle CHARLES C. KREISLER; folder .27 contains the will of her aunt, FREDERIQUE P. KREISLER.

SECONDARY MATERIALS IN THE COLLECTION: The Kreisler Collection has received much attention since its acquisition. It was on exhibition at the Staten Island Institute in November and December of 1948, and was the subject of an article by Mabel Abbott, Curator of History and Literature (*Proceedings*, Vol. XI, No. 2, January 1949). More recently, Gail Schneider, Editor/Librarian/Archivist of SIIAS, worked extensively with the collection in preparation for her publication *A Cool And Pleasant Retreat But A Hungry Soil*, published in 1977 by SIIAS in cooperation with the New York State Department of Parks. As a result, box 9 in the Kreisler Collection contains secondary materials and research notes pertaining to the acquisition, exhibition, and publication of Kreisler materials by SIIAS.

These include the "Kreisler Compilation" of Mabel Abbott, folders .1-.13; William T. Davis notes and clippings, folder .14; the record of gift to the New-York Historical Society in their *Quarterly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4, folder .15; the "Kreisler Calendar" compiled by Gail Schneider and Hugh Powell, folders .16-24; and SIIAS Records pertaining to the Accession and Exhibition of the Kreisler Collection, folders .25-33.

SPECIAL STORAGE GROUPS: The great majority of the Kreisler material was easy to house in legal-sized containers. Oversized materials are stored in print boxes and the mapcase, inventoried under headings which correspond to the above established subgroups. Framed prints, family memorabilia and paintings occupy box 8. Family photographs and two oversized bound volumes occupy an adapted 1 cubic foot box, box 10.

BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS:

In an effort to keep the record groups coherent, biographical information on individuals is housed in box 7 with genealogical material compiled by Louise Kreisler, or in box 9 with secondary information compiled by researchers. Photographs of the Kreisler family and their connections by marriage can be found in the Family Album in box 10, see the list of names in folder .1.

KREISLERVILLE: In the decades that followed the erection of the first Kreisler Brickworks on Staten Island in 1855, Balthasar Kreisler founded the only "Factory Town" on Staten Island: mansions on the hill for himself and two of his sons, tenements and two-family

housing for workers, a grocery store, hotel and post office. Development of the village culminated in 1883, when Balthasar had built, endowed, and gave to the village St. Peter's German Evangelical Church, known as St. Peterskirche. At present, the factory—Balthasar's mansion—and most of the workers' housing has been destroyed by fire or demolished. However, the church building now houses a Magyar Reformed congregation, and the elaborate Queen Anne mansion of Charles Kreischer still stands.

There was not appropriate material in the collection to establish a subgroup on the village. Official records were maintained by the Town of Westfield, Richmond County, N.Y. However, interested researchers can consult BALTHASAR KREISCHER, box 1, deeds, folders .2-.9 and "Subdivision of Homestead Property" In Kreischerville, Notes & Diagram, folder .46.

BALTHASAR KREISCHER & SONS: box 2, folder .3 "Diagram of Dwellings at Kreischerville;" and folder .37, tax bills, Richmond County. Information about the town is also found in box 8, prints, paintings, etc.; box 9, secondary materials; box 10, photographs and in print box and map case storage.

ARRANGEMENT:

For purposes of simplified reference, this collection is identified by the name of the progenitor of the Kreischer family in New York City. Balthasar Kreischer emigrated to New York in 1836, where he founded a brick factory in partnership with Charles Mumpeton. In the 1850s, after his partner's death, Kreischer moved both his business and his residence to Staten Island. The firm, with several minor name changes to reflect participation by various family members and others, continued until 1927, involved two subsequent generations of Kreisachers.

Of the Kreischer collection, a few original series could be identified, ie: the bills from the Estate of Balthasar Kreischer, still wrapped, tied and labeled in month-by-month order. The remaining papers were arranged after careful examination, into subgroups which identify the materials with the individual or corporate entity to which they pertain, and series which in most cases divided business from personal papers, or divided papers into groups by type of record. Further arrangement of these subgroups and series is described below.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS IN SIIAS COLLECTIONS:

Artifacts manufactured by the Kreisachers out of Staten Island clay are stored in a collection box. Paintings given by Louise Kreischer are housed in the Art Department. IAM sheets for both are being prepared.

RELATED MATERIALS:

Due to the administrative difficulties at the New-York Historical Society, we have not yet been able to exchange finding aids with this repository. However, we have the *Quarterly* in which receipt of the donation is acknowledged, and correspondence of Louise Kreischer which indicates that the materials included military papers of which SIIAS received both photographic and manuscript

copies, and business records of which we have no further information. It is hoped that an exchange of finding aids can soon be made.

Eloise Beil, Assistant Archivist
June 1980

1865
New York State Census of Richmond County

Westfield

House number 270, family number 305.

Balthasar Kreischer. Age 53. Male. Born in Germany. Has been married twice.
Manufacturer. Naturalized voter. Owner of land.

Matilda Kreischer. Age 43. Female. Wife, Born in Germany. Her first marriage.
She has borne two children.

George Kreischer. Age 19. Male. Child. Born in New York City.

Frederick Kreischer. Age 19. Male. Child. Born in New York City.

Louisa Kreischer. Age 17. Female. Child. Born in New York City.

Charles Kreischer. Age 14. Male. Child. Born in New York City.

Edwin Kreischer. Age 11. Male. Child. Born in New York City.

Henry Clay. Servant. Age 17. Male. Born-unknown.

Josephine Schmidt. Age 45. Female. Born in Germany. She has born 3 children.

Mary Cronstadt. Age 22. Female. Born in Germany. Single.

Conrad Elder. Age 46. Overseer. Born in Germany. Married (1st time). Alien.

Catharine Elder. Age 45. Female. Born in Germany. Married (1st time).

BALTHASAR KREISCHER PAPERS
Box Inventories:

Box 1/10

Folders		
1-2	Articles of Agreement	1869-1870
3-11	Bonded Debts and Deeds	1853-1877
12-14	Military Papers; Wills	1850-1877
15-53	Estate of Balthasar Kreischer Letters, bills paid, promissory notes, accounts, quit claim, subdivision of homestead property	1886-1907

Box 2/10

Folders		
1-3	Chronology of Kreischer Businesses	1845-1880; 1927
4-19	Annual Statements	1893-1898
20-25	Clay listings, correspondence, insurance	n.d., 1883-1880
26-32	Orders, price list	1867; n.d.
33-40	Tax bills, trust funds, Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Co.	1877-1906

Box 3/10

Folders		
1-31	Crary Clay Heater Company business papers	1877-1879
32-45	New York-Anderson Pressed business papers	1887-1893
46	Staten Island Kaolin Company business papers	1870

Box 4/10

Folders		
1-5	George F. Kreischer: patents	1873-1893
6-35	George F. Kreischer: investments	1880-1897

Box 5/10

Folders		
1-24	George F. Kreischer & Clara Hoff: personal papers	1858-1896
25-33	Memberships	1866-1910

Box 6/10

Folders		
1-29	John B. Kreischer papers	1893-1932

Box 7/10	Folders 1-27	Louise Kreischer	1868-1944
Box 8/10	Folders 1-5	Framed prints and paintings family memorabilia	n.d., 1931
Box 9/10	Folders 1-11	Secondary materials: research notes, clippings, SIIAS records (M. Abbott)	1847-1948
	12-16	M. Abbott research: compilation	1930-1948
	17-24	Schneider-Powell research	1722-1946
	25-33	SIIAS Records	(1891)-1950
Box 10/10	Folders 1-11	Kreischer family photographs and family oversize bound volumes	1870-1894
Print Box		Printsized storage: deeds, maps, plans, patents, law license, surveys, prints	1853-1903; n.d.
Mapcase 1-3		Oversized papers: deeds, maps, and plans (in mapcase storage)	1870, 1875, n.d.

*Boxes containing artifacts and Kreischer bricks are now located in Artifacts Rooms (August 12, 1990)